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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/909,846	07/20/2001	Trent M. Molter	PES-0055	8797

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EXAMINER

KALAFUT, STEPHEN J

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

1745

DATE MAILED: 07/30/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/909,846

Applicant(s)

MOLTER ET AL.

Examiner

Stephen J. Kalafut

Art Unit

1745

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 26 June 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-33 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 1-11 and 13-23 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 31 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 12, 24, 26, 32 and 33 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 25 and 27-30 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 4, 5.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s) _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

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Applicant's election without traverse of Species III, a frame member, in Paper No. 7 is acknowledged. Claims 1-11 and 13-23 are withdrawn from further consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142(b) as being drawn to a nonelected species, there being no allowable generic or linking claim. Claims 24-33 read on the elected invention, while claim 12 is generic, not being limited to any of the three species listed in paper no. 6. Claims 13 and 16, as well as their dependent claims, recite a non-elected species, the compression member.

Claims 26, 32 and 33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The term "substantial distance" in claims 26 and 31 is a relative term which renders the claim indefinite. The term "substantial" is not defined by the claim, the specification does not provide a standard for ascertaining the requisite degree, and one of ordinary skill in the art would not be reasonably apprised of the scope of the invention. Likewise, the terms "high pressure" and "low pressure, in claim 33, would have uncertain scope.

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claim 24 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Tsien *et al.*
(US 4,124,478).

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Tsien *et al.* disclose a frame (2) for an electrochemical cell (column 2, lines 59-65), which includes inner and outer peripheries, a surface between them, and fluid ports (8A through 8F, 10A through 10F, 12, 14) extending through the frame. See figure 1. Each port is connected by a set of manifolds (16) defined in the surface of the frame, as best seen in figures 2 and 3. These manifolds spread out from their respective ports and thus extend a distance beyond each port along the inner and outer peripheries.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Andrews *et al.* (US 6,036,827) in view of King (US 4,500,403).

Andrews *et al.* disclose an electrochemical cell including a membrane electrode assembly (72), and thus two electrodes and a membrane; two separators (68, 78), each in contact with one of the electrodes; and two end plates (60, 62). One end plate (60) includes a water inlet (56) and a hydrogen outlet (58), both connected to one electrode, and oxygen outlets (84) connected to the other electrode. See column 13, lines 1-11. This claim differs from Andrews *et al.* by reciting electrical conductors, each extending through an end plate and in contact with one of the separators, and thus with a corresponding electrode. King discloses an electrolysis cell in which electric conductors extend through opposite ends of its housing. See figure 1. Because this

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arrangement keeps the electrolyte away from the conductors, and makes fabrication simple (column 2, lines 53-55), it would be obvious to provide the cell of Andrews *et al.* with electrical conductors through its ends, as shown by King.

Claims 25 and 27-30 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Tsien *et al.* do not disclose the radially offset gap or the protector lip, in combination with the ports and manifolds.

Claims 26 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, set forth in this Office action and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. These claims depend from claim 25.

Claim 31 is allowed. This claim also recites the radially offset gap.

Claims 32 and 33 would be allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, set forth in this Office action. Claim 32 depends from allowable claim 31. The combination of gaps and manifolds forming the boundary between a frame and the outside edge of a flow field is not disclosed by the prior art, cited either herein or by applicants.

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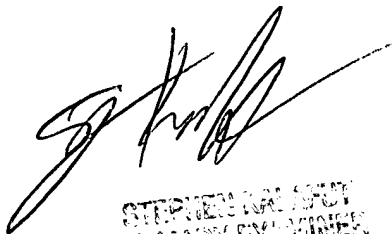
The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Tsutsumi *et al.* (US 4,719,157) disclose a fuel cell stack with terminals on one end plate. Fauvel (US 4,758,481) and Clark *et al.* (US 6,524,452) disclose fuel cell frames with ports and fluid passages extending therefrom.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Stephen J. Kalafut whose telephone number is (703) 308-0433. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8:00-4:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick J. Ryan can be reached on (703) 308-2383. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 872-9310 for regular communications and (703) 872-9311 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0661.

sjk
July 17, 2003


STEPHEN J. KALAFUT
PRIMARY EXAMINER
GROUP
1700